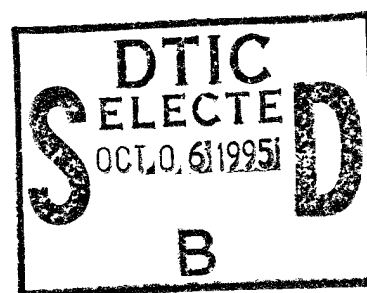


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CASE STUDIES IN RESERVE COMPONENT VOLUNTEERISM:
THE 711th POSTAL COMPANY IN OPERATION RESTORE HOPE



John R. Brinkerhoff
Stanley A. Horowitz, *Project Leader*

April 1995

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Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Reserve Affairs)

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PREFACE

This document was prepared by the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Reserve Affairs) under a task entitled "Reserve Component Volunteerism." The objectives of the task are to determine the extent to which Reserve volunteers can support national military strategy, to identify the mission areas where Reserve volunteers can be most effectively employed, to assess the adequacy of legal justification and policy guidance for planning and programming Reserve volunteers for operational missions, and to suggest additional legislative initiatives for policy revisions that may be needed to assure access to Reserve volunteers. To achieve those objectives, IDA consulted published works and official documents and interviewed individuals involved in recent instances in which Reserve volunteers were used to perform operational missions. This document is one of a series of case studies that resulted from that research.

This document was reviewed for accuracy by some of those who were interviewed. It did not undergo internal IDA review.

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A. INTRODUCTION

This is the story of how a provisional volunteer unit—the 711th Adjutant General (AG) Company (General Support (GS) Postal)—provided postal support to U.S. Army Forces in Somalia during Operation Restore Hope. When the United States deployed 35,000 troops to Somalia in December 1992 on a humanitarian relief mission to feed starving Somalis, it became necessary to provide postal service for the troops in the theater. As in civil life, military postal service usually is taken for granted and seldom noticed, except when it does not work to the customer's complete satisfaction. The postal effort in Somalia was small, but it involved several features of interest to the Army as it learns how to support operations other than war in austere theaters. The focus of this document is on the use of both Active Component (AC) and Reserve Component (RC) provisional postal units; the use of RC volunteers to staff one of those provisional units; the resistance of the Army to both provisional units and RC volunteers; and the way in which the Army met the need for postal service. Postal service is a small function, but it is a good example of the kinds of problems that have to be solved to make full use of the Total Army.

The Army decided prior to the operation that it would accomplish the Somalia mission by rotating units to and from the theater about every 4 to 6 months. This decision marked a distinct departure from the previous practice of establishing units in a theater and then keeping them up to strength by providing individual replacements to offset losses. Unit rotation meant that complete postal units and personnel turned over en masse about every 3 months. The headquarters to which these postal units reported also changed on about the same cycle.

The five Army units shown in Table 1 provided postal service in Somalia. In 1992, the 129th AG Company (Direct Support (DS) Postal), Fort Bragg, North Carolina, was the only deployable postal unit in the Active Army. The other eleven AC postal units—nine in Europe and two in Korea—were busy delivering the mail [1]. Even though it also had missions supporting other operations, the 129th was the first postal unit to go to Somalia. The next postal unit to arrive in Somalia was the 711th, followed by three provisional AC units staffed by AC personnel.

The headquarters directly responsible for command and control of the postal unit was also changing, as shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Army Postal Units in Operation Restore Hope

Unit	Strength	From	To
129th AG Company (DS Postal)	42	Dec 92	Feb 93 ^a
711th AG Company (GS Postal)	48	Jan 93	Jun 93 ^b
43rd AG Detachment (GS Postal)	16	Jun 93	Aug 93
507th AG Detachment (GS Postal)	12	Aug 93	Jan 94
564th AG Detachment (GS Postal)	9	Jan 94	Jul 94

^a Thirty-five personnel of the 129th AG Company redeployed on 1 February 1993, leaving 7 personnel in Somalia until March 1993.

^b Twelve members of the 711th left Somalia on 24 February 1993 and another 13 left on 21 March 1993.

Table 2. Army Support Headquarters in Operation Restore Hope

Headquarters	From	To
10th Mountain Division	Dec 92	Feb 93
JTF Support Command	Mar 93	May 93
43rd Corps Support Group	May 93	Aug 93
507th Corps Support Group	Aug 93	Jan 94
564th Personnel Service Company	Jan 94	Jul 94

B. THE MILITARY POSTAL SERVICE¹

The Military Postal Service includes personnel and units from all of the services. The Secretary of the Army is the Executive Agent for postal service for the Department of Defense (DoD) and directs the activities of the Military Postal Service Agency, located in Northern Virginia.

Delivery of mail to and from an overseas theater involves the United States Postal Service (USPS), the Air Force, and each military service with forces in the theater. Mail addressed for Army and Fleet Post Offices is collected by the USPS at designated mail facilities. If commercial aircraft are available, the mail is transported on commercial flights to military mail facilities in the theater, to be sorted and distributed by military units. Generally, each service handles mail for its own troops, but one service may be assigned as the single manager for all mail entering a theater. For mail being sent from the theater, the process works in reverse.

¹ Much of the material about the Military Postal Service and postal operations in Somalia was obtained from Major Nina Garcia, DA Staff Postal Officer [1 and 2].

For the Somalia operation, most mail was collected by USPS at the mail facility at John F. Kennedy International Airport, New York, and turned over to the Joint Military Postal Activity, Atlantic. Commercial aircraft were not available to carry mail to Somalia, so the USPS sent the mail by truck to the 46th Air Postal Squadron of the 512th Air Wing at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, where it was loaded onto Air Force cargo aircraft going to Somalia. Upon arrival in Somalia, the mail was received by the Mogadishu Air Mail Terminal operated by the 9th Air Postal Squadron. Mail for the Army forces was then turned over in bulk to the Army postal units for sorting and distribution to the addressees.

At the time of Operation Desert Storm, the Army had two types of postal units. Direct Support (DS) companies provided retail postal services, such as dispensing stamps and money orders and receiving and distributing letters and packages. General Support (GS) companies did the wholesale task of breaking down bulk mail into smaller lots to be sent to supporting DS postal units or directly to receiving units.² The numbers of Army personnel involved in postal work are small, and the Army has no special Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) for postal workers, but adds Additional Skill Indicator (ASI) F5 to general administrative MOSs to identify trained postal clerks.³ At the time of Operation Restore Hope, in addition to the twelve AC postal units mentioned above, the Army had two postal units in the ARNG and sixteen in the USAR.⁴

C. THE 129TH AG COMPANY

When planning started for Operation Restore Hope, the initial solution to providing postal service in Somalia was to deploy the 129th Postal Unit that was retained in the AC for just such contingencies. Forty-two members of the 129th AG Company arrived in Somalia on 28 December 1992 to support the approximately 25,000 troops there. The 129th already had many of its own personnel deployed in support of ongoing missions, and there was a general shortage of qualified postal personnel. Several personnel with the general skill of administrative specialist (MOS 71L) from HHD, 18th Personnel and

² The Army has since reorganized its postal units on a modular basis with two kinds of platoons that may be assembled into companies as appropriate for a given workload. The Operations Platoon does the GS task for a population of 36,000 troops. The Services Platoon does the DS task for a population of 6,000 troops [2].

³ The Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps all have skill codes for postal clerks or specialists [3].

⁴ As a result of the Operation Desert Storm and Somalia experiences, the Army is adding more deployable AC postal units so that by FY96, three companies with six service platoons will be in the AC, in addition to the AC units serving Europe and Korea. Basically, this will provide an AC postal capability for each of the three deployable corps. As a result of the realignment of the Army's Reserve Components, the two ARNG postal units will transfer to the USAR.

Administration Battalion, and the 573rd Personnel Service Company were cross-trained hurriedly in postal operations and attached to the 129th AG Company for the Somalia mission [4].

The 129th AG Company was a DS postal unit, and it lacked the equipment (e.g., forklifts and conveyer belts) to perform the GS mission. Upon arrival, the 129th established its orderly room and main base at the Mogadishu Air Terminal. Retail post offices were set up at Bela Dogle and Kismayu to support the Brigade Support Areas (BSAs) of the 10th Mountain Division.

The 129th AG Company turned over its postal mission to the 711th AG Company and redeployed to Fort Bragg on 1 February 1993. Seven members of the 129th remained in Somalia to operate two outlying post offices at Bela Dogle and Kismayu.⁵ The last group from the 129th departed Somalia in mid-March 1993. The main body of the 129th had stayed in Somalia only 36 days.

D. THE SEARCH FOR AN RC POSTAL UNIT

The requirement for an RC postal unit to augment the 129th was recognized from the start. It would have been possible to use AC personnel by taking them from other units, but the leadership was reluctant to break up high-priority Contingency Force Packages.⁶ Both the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve were asked to nominate postal units and did.

In response to a request from FORSCOM, the Army National Guard originally nominated ten units for participation in Operation Restore Hope. Later, FORSCOM dropped the requirement for nine of the units but indicated a continued requirement for a postal unit. The National Guard nominated the 1015th AG Company (DS Postal) from Indiana. The 1015th was a Project Standard Bearer unit whose members had volunteered to be an operational unit available to report to active duty within 7 days of notification in support of Army contingency operations [6]. Thirty-seven of the unit's members volunteered to go to Somalia, and 83 additional volunteers were obtained from other units to bring the 1015th to its authorized strength of 120. After reporting this information to the Army, the National Guard waited for word to put the unit on active duty, but no word was

⁵ The number of 129th personnel who stayed behind after the main body redeployed back to Fort Bragg is cited as seven in some sources and nine in others.

⁶ Much of the information on the formation of the 711th AG Company is based on a group interview conducted at Headquarters, USARC, on 3 August 1994 [5].

received—ever. Later the Army National Guard was told that the requirement was for a smaller GS postal company instead of the larger DS company [7].

That left it up to the Army Reserve. Presumably to demonstrate its reliability for minor contingencies of this kind, the Army Reserve wanted the mission and lobbied to get it.

The U.S. Army Reserve Command (USARC), Atlanta, Georgia, was assigned the mission of finding a USAR postal unit to go to Somalia. On 9 December 1992, USARC verbally tasked the 81st Army Reserve Command (ARCOM), Atlanta, Georgia, to establish a volunteer provisional unit based on the 351st AG Company (GS Postal), Coral Gables, Florida, but without all of the personnel necessarily coming from that company. The 81st ARCOM told USARC that the 351st was in Korea on annual training, would not be due back until 17 December 1992, and could not be made available for the Somalia mission [8 and 9]. The 81st ARCOM proposed that the 834th AG Company (GS Postal) be used for the mission.

On 10 December 1992, the 81st ARCOM reported to USARC the results of its first canvassing of the 834th, saying that 25 of the unit personnel would go to Somalia based on a reporting date of 4 January 1994. However, when the reporting date was changed to first 22 December 1992 and then to 27 December 1992, many of the original volunteers backed out. Nevertheless, the 81st ARCOM reported to USARC that as of 18 December 1992, the ARCOM could provide from 20 to 42 volunteers, depending on the reporting date.

In the meantime, USARC had reported to the Office of the Chief, Army Reserve (OCAR), that the 834th was to provide a command group and almost a complete unit of volunteers based on the initial estimates provided by the 81st ARCOM. Based on that information, the Chief, Army Reserve (CAR) told the senior Army leadership that the entire 834th postal unit would volunteer to go to Somalia. This information was two or three days out of date, for USARC had already decided to form a new provisional unit using volunteers from other postal units [10]. When the correct information was forwarded to OCAR from USARC, the CAR had to go back and inform the senior Army leadership that his earlier report had been erroneous.

The 81st ARCOM never expected the 834th to provide an entire volunteer unit; the intention was to build a full unit with personnel from several units within the ARCOM. Contrary to the reports that circulated in the Pentagon, the 834th AG Company was never asked to volunteer as a unit. The 81st ARCOM did not make such a tasking, and the 3320th U.S. Army Garrison, West Palm Beach, Florida, the headquarters directly above the

834th, never assigned that mission to the unit [8 and 11]. Captain Jim Forey, the company commander, and First Sergeant Bob Sullivan of the 834th AG Company say that the unit was not asked to volunteer as a unit, although the unit members would likely have done so if they had been asked. The request for volunteers for the 711th specified only soldiers in grade E-4 or below, so Captain Forey, other officers, and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) could not volunteer. Not incidentally, Captain Forey says that if he and his troops had been “told to go” to Somalia, they would all have done so willingly [12 and 13]. Ultimately, the 81st ARCOM provided seventeen volunteers for the 711th AG Company, twelve of them from the 351st and two from the 834th [8].

This misunderstanding was the source of considerable controversy in the Pentagon, and some members of the senior Army leadership believe that the Chief of the Army Reserve deceived them deliberately. The impression in the Pentagon was that an entire Army Reserve postal unit had volunteered to go to Somalia as a unit but later had backed down and refused to go. This was not correct, but it left a bad taste in the mouths of the Active Army leadership as the Army implemented the decision to use USAR personnel to fill a provisional unit—the 711th AG Company (GS Postal)—for the Somalia mission.

E. THE 711TH POSTAL COMPANY—FORMATION AND DEPLOYMENT

The 711th AG Company (GS Postal) was an AC unit with an AC Unit Identification Code (UIC). It was formed using a Table of Organization and Equipment (TOE) for a GS postal unit. The Department of the Army—taking a lesson from an earlier experience in forming a Civil Affairs unit for the 1991 operation in taking care of Haitian refugees at the Guantanamo Naval Base—elected in effect to activate a Component 4 unit in the Active Component [14].⁷ This had the beneficial effect of establishing the mission, role, organizational structure, and personnel and equipment requirements for the unit to be formed. Having this “blueprint” made it easier to form the unit and provide the necessary resources.

Responsibility for the formation of the 711th AG Company (GS Postal) was assigned by FORSCOM to the Commander, 18th Airborne Corps, Fort Bragg, North Carolina. USARC took on the mission of finding the people and the equipment.

⁷ All Army units are assigned to a component. Component 1 is the Active Army; Component 2 is the Army National Guard; Component 3 is the Army Reserve; and Component 4 is an unfunded unit that is a statement of a requirement. Not all of the parties involved in this action agree that the Army actually transferred a Component 4 unit to Component 1, but all agree that the 711th was a Component 1 unit.

To obtain volunteers, USARC sent out a letter to solicit volunteers with postal experience, and a list of 250 volunteers was compiled. About 25 percent of this group tested positive for tuberculosis in the preliminary physical examinations. Although none of these individuals actually had tuberculosis, they were not selected [5]. A group of 49 volunteers reported to Fort Bragg on 28 December 1992. Nine of this original group's members were disqualified for medical reasons, and two more were disqualified for personal reasons. An additional eleven volunteers were sent by USARC to Fort Bragg, of which two were also disqualified for medical reasons. Ultimately, 5 officers and 43 enlisted personnel deployed with the unit. They came from 17 different units under 7 different ARCOMs.[15]

All of the volunteers came from Army Reserve Troop Program Units (TPUs). USARC did not accept volunteers from CPF units, so all of the personnel selected came from follow-on units. USARC did not try to obtain volunteers from the individual Ready Reserve (IRR) because of their belief that Reservists who were not current unit members would not have done the work recently and would not be qualified. The USARC personnel in charge of obtaining the volunteers also say that they were able to get enough volunteers in only 3 days, while it would have taken 10 days to 2 weeks for the Army Reserve Personnel Center (ARPERCEN) to have delivered volunteers.

All of the volunteers that deployed were qualified postal clerks, and many of them had extensive experience with the USPS and military postal units. Members of postal units are highly specialized, and their jobs are not interchangeable. Personnel who work in the Registry Section, for example, have to know how to process registered mail (including a lot of classified documents) and have to have security clearances [5].

Finding equipment for the new unit was a major effort. Because the unit was an AC unit, it was necessary to obtain the Deputy Secretary of Defense's permission to take equipment from RC units.⁸ In order to speed up the process, the equipment from RC units was simply loaned to the 711th on a hand receipt. A number of equipment issues were addressed in the process. For example, manual conveyers were used because Desert Storm experience had shown that motorized conveyers did not work well in a desert environment. The equipment was found in a variety of sources, assembled at Fort Gillem, Georgia, inspected, and then shipped as a set to Fort Bragg. USARC had a difficult time assembling

⁸ This requirement was established during the Vietnam War to make it difficult for the military services to take equipment from their Reserve Components to fill shortages in their active units. This outmoded policy is ill-suited for the current environment.

the necessary supplies and specialized equipment for postal operations in a theater. The practice of maintaining complete packages of postal supplies and equipment for contingency operations was discontinued in 1985, causing problems for Operation Desert Storm as well as for Somalia [5]. Much of this effort was not apparent to the 711th, and the unit commander thought that the process of assembling the postal equipment went fairly well [16].

At Fort Bragg, there was some initial confusion about who, exactly, would be responsible for forming, training, validating, and deploying the 711th AG Company. This was the first time that an AC unit was to be filled with RC volunteers, and the 711th did not fit into the mobilization process that had been designed for RC units. The 18th Personnel Group wanted nothing to do with assembling, equipping, or training the unit, but would make a decision on the unit's capability to accomplish the postal mission after the unit was validated for deployment [17]. The 18th Personnel Group's position was that the 711th was a reserve unit, and the Directorate of Reserve Component Support (DRCS) should have overall responsibility. DRCS agreed on 5 January 1992 to establish validation standards and handle the operation, but as an RC unit rather than as an AC unit staffed by reservists. Major (P) Johnny Virgin of the DRCS staff prepared a set of reasonable validation standards for the 711th. DRCS also took action to bring Readiness Group (RG) Bragg into the process of setting validation standards. Ultimately, it was agreed that DRCS would have overall responsibility for the 711th, RG Bragg would work on individual soldier readiness, and the 18th Personnel Group (Airborne) would handle the technical postal aspects [4 and 17].⁹

Readiness Group Bragg, although brought in late, pitched in to help the 711th get ready to deploy. RG Bragg was not involved initially in the 711th activation and did not even know that the unit was being formed until the DRCS asked for assistance. At that point, RG Bragg assigned three personnel full-time to assist the 711th in performing some training and negotiating around the various activities at Fort Bragg [18]. The RG, for example, helped the 711th do its range firing with other units because the ranges at Fort Bragg were already fully scheduled [16].

The commander of the 711th AG Company was Captain Tamara Dozier, USAR [19]. Captain Dozier was an experienced postal officer serving for several years as the

⁹ Lieutenant Colonel Tom Bedient, the DRCS project officer, recalls that he, Major Johnny Virgin, Major Cyrus, and Ms. Cathy Patterson of the DRCS met with Mr. John Sheets from RG Bragg and Major Roman Garcia from the Fort Bragg Directorate of Plans and Training (DPT) to review and revise the initial list of validation standards.

commander of the 320th AG Company (GS Postal). When the call for volunteers reached the 83rd ARCOM, Captain Dozier and two of her officers of the 320th (First Lieutenant Lee Perkins and First Lieutenant Edith Sneed) volunteered, giving the 711th a core of leaders who had worked together before. Captain Dozier volunteered because she felt an obligation to set an example and because she wanted to participate in a military operation in her specialty. Although Captain Dozier was the commander at the time of Desert Storm, she was pregnant and did not deploy with the 320th to Saudi Arabia for that operation. This time, she wanted to go.

Captain Dozier arrived at Fort Bragg on 28 December 1993 with the rest of the volunteers for the 711th. She had found out on 22 December 1992 that she was to be the commander of the new unit. Upon arrival, she found that three organizations were involved in processing and validating the 711th for deployment. Captain Dozier thought that the 18th Personnel Group was not enthusiastic about dealing with a bunch of Reservists, and did not get involved much. Readiness Group Bragg was helpful and loaned the 711th some vehicles for local transportation after the unit's own vehicles were loaded. RG Bragg also helped arrange for training facilities, such as ranges. The task of processing the unit for deployment fell to the DRCS. Captain Dozier's impression was that personnel at Fort Bragg were not well prepared to deal with a new kind of AC unit staffed with RC volunteers because their previous focus had been on deploying either real AC units or complete RC units [19].

Lieutenant Perkins thought that the volunteers arrived at Fort Bragg at a bad time; it was the holiday season and many other things were going on. The volunteers sat around for a few days waiting for instructions until they decided to get organized and do the training on their own. Some of the volunteers thought they were going to serve at Fort Bragg and were dismayed to find that they would be going to Somalia [20].

The DRCS at Fort Bragg found it was hard to deal with a volunteer company that arrived "without an MTOE, equipment, history, charter, or mission." The mobilization process at Fort Bragg was set up to receive whole RC units, and it turned out to be inappropriate in some respects for volunteer units. For one thing, the DRCS was unable to prescribe a course of instruction for a volunteer unit that had no records to establish its current state of training [21].

A team of postal experts from USARC spent the week of 4-7 January 1994 at Fort Bragg helping the 711th to get ready to perform its postal mission. Mr. Kenneth W. Davis, Official Mail Manager, and Mr. Edward Demetsky, Information Specialist, both had extensive experience in military postal management. Captain Nina Garcia, DA Postal Staff

Officer, was also present for a portion of the week. The postal experts met with Captain Dozier and other members of the 711th to decide how postal support would be accomplished. Topics discussed included whether to use the zip-plus-four codes (yes), weight belts for workers (yes), and manual or motorized conveyers (manual) and what the proper forms were for mail handling. The location of post offices in Somalia and the network for distribution were also discussed and the forms, supplies, and equipment needed were listed and requisitioned. At the end of the visit, Captain Dozier and the visiting team from USARC briefed the XVIII Airborne Corps Adjutant General, Colonel Stephen R. Smith, who was pleased at the way the deployment was progressing [22].

Validation of the 711th for the postal mission was conducted by Major William A. Watley, S-3 of the 18th Personnel Group on 6 January 1993. Messrs. Davis and Demetsky presented the plan for mail movement. Captain Dozier presented the mission of the unit and the process of deploying the unit. Following the briefing, a panel discussion was conducted for members of the 711th, who were present for the entire validation meeting. After this, the unit was validated for its postal mission in Somalia [22].¹⁰

Almost all of the unit training accomplished by the 711th during its two weeks at Fort Bragg was initiated and conducted by Captain Dozier and her company officers. According to the DRCS, no program of instruction for rapid training of postal units was requested or received from the AG school [21]. Since all of the unit members were qualified individually in both military and postal skills, the emphasis was on building unit cohesion and preparing for the Somalia mission. Captain Dozier and her officers prepared a Mission Essential Task List (METL) based on her experience as the commander of the 320th AG Company and established and carried out a training program. The 18th Personnel Group was not involved in training the unit, except for a briefing delivered on the threat situation in Somalia [4].

The 711th was validated for deployment by the Mobilization Assistance Team (MAT), Fort Bragg, and the validation was supported by Colonel Thomas H. Davis, Commander of RG Bragg; Colonel Richard Underwood, Director of Reserve Components Support; and Colonel Stephen R. Smith, Commander of the 18th Personnel Group. Because FORSCOM guidance on the validation of the unit was unclear, the standards were established by the Fort Bragg MAT and DRCS [15 and 17].¹¹ There is no doubt that the

¹⁰ Lieutenant Colonel Bedient does not believe that a postal validation decision was made at the meeting on 6 January 1992, but he was not present at the meeting, and the USARC Team's Report is specific on this matter.

¹¹ Colonel Steven R. Smith was double-hatted as the corps AG and the group commander.

unit was fully validated. According to the 18th Personnel and Administration Battalion, both the 129th and the 711th were "fully prepared, equipped, and manned at the time of deployment" [4].

F. THE 711TH POSTAL UNIT—OPERATIONS IN SOMALIA

The 711th Postal Unit arrived in Somalia on 14 January 1993. An orderly room and main base of operations were set up next to the 129th AG Company at the Mogadishu Air Terminal. For the first four days, the unit worked alongside members of the 129th at the air terminal to learn the routine for receiving and sorting the mail. On 1 February 1993, most of the members of the 129th AG Company left Somalia, taking their postal equipment with them [23]. The 711th took over responsibility for the entire postal mission, including the two outlying post offices at Bela Dogle and Kismayu, operated by seven members of the 129th that remained behind [19].

In January 1993, the major U.S. Army element in Somalia was the 10th Mountain Division, which was not only the combat element but also the Army Force (ARFOR) responsible for theater administration and support. The 711th AG Company worked for the 10th Mountain Division Personnel Officer (G-1), who was also the Commander of a provisional personnel services battalion composed of the 10th Personnel Services Company, the 546th Personnel Services Company, the 711th Postal Company, and (until its redeployment) the 129th Postal Company [24]. In March, the United Nations took over control of the Somalia operation, and the 10th Mountain Division redeployed to the United States. Responsibility for supporting the remaining U.S. Army forces fell to the Joint Task Force Support Command, which included the 593rd Corps Support Group [25].

Upon its arrival in Somalia, the 711th had five officers: Captain Dozier, company commander; Captain Brian C. Sleight, executive officer; First Lieutenant Lee J. Perkins, postal finance and supply officer, and Lieutenant Michael T. Barrett and Lieutenant Edith Sneed, platoon leaders. Lieutenant Barrett, as a security team leader, was responsible for seeing that the trucks used to move the mail to and from the air terminal were not disturbed by Somalis seeking to jump on the trucks [20]. Lieutenant Sneed was in charge of mail breakdown and distribution. Captain Sleight, a medical student in civil life, was transferred to the 86th Evacuation Hospital shortly after arriving in Somalia for the duration of his tour [26].¹²

¹² Captain Dozier intimates that the unit was too small for two captains.

Some tension arose between the Army and the Air Force postal authorities in Somalia during Captain Dozier's period in command. Captain Dozier had some disputes with Major Walt Kamien, the Air Force postal squadron commander, about delays with outgoing mail. Unable to determine if the delays were occurring at Mogadishu or elsewhere, Captain Dozier and the first sergeant went on orders to Frankfurt to discuss the problem at the large Air Force postal terminal there. Because Captain Dozier was not permitted to enter the postal facility because the Air Force personnel said she was in Germany "illegally without country clearance." She managed only to have a brief conversation in a snack bar with an Air Force postal officer about the problem [26].¹³

Postal workload for Somalia was overestimated at the start of the operation. The Department of the Army's initial estimates were based on experience in Desert Storm, but these estimates included mail addressed to any military person in the theater. This "any soldier" mail had been a big factor in Southwest Asia, and had almost doubled the amount of incoming mail to be processed. When the decision was made to discourage "any soldier" mail for Somalia, the actual postal workload was smaller than the troops available to do the work [27].¹⁴ Another factor affecting workload was the decline in the U.S. troop population as the mission evolved and different organizations rotated in and out.

As the postal situation stabilized and workload declined, the number of postal troops in Somalia also declined. The departure of the main body of the 129th AG Company on 1 February 1993 left 57 postal personnel in Somalia.

The first downsizing increment for the 711th occurred when twelve personnel redeployed to Fort Bragg on 24 February 1994. In mid-March 1993, the remaining 129th personnel redeployed and the 711th took over the post offices they had been operating. A second increment of 711th personnel returned on 21 March 1993. The strength of the 711th in Somalia after the second redeployment increment was nineteen personnel—about the size of a postal platoon.¹⁵

Captain Dozier considered the effects of the downsizing and concluded that four officers would be too many for a detachment of only nineteen personnel. Lieutenants

¹³ Major Garcia notes that CONUS mail came directly from Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, so that a trip to Frankfurt would not have been helpful.

¹⁴ "Any soldier" mail is not to be confused with "free mail," which was authorized for Somalia by the Secretary of Defense on 22 December 1992.

¹⁵ A postal platoon designed to support 6,000 troops in a theater was authorized sixteen persons.

Perkins and Sneed volunteered to stay on in Somalia, and Captain Dozier, Lieutenant Barrett, and the unit first sergeant left with the second return increment [19]. This action was approved by Colonel Bryan Lee, Chief of Staff, and by Brigadier General Billy K Solomon, Commander, of the Joint Task Force Support Command [28].

Captain Dozier's return to Fort Bragg in March 1993 was not well received by the authorities there, who apparently believed that she should have stayed with the unit and at one point ordered her to return to Somalia. Out-processing for the returning 711th troops was slow, but after intervention by USARC, the situation was resolved, and Captain Dozier and the other members of the 711th on that redeployment increment were released from active duty and returned to their homes [19].

Upon the departure of the second increment, First Lieutenant Perkins took over the 711th and continued postal operations. When the call had come for volunteers for Somalia, Lieutenant Perkins had been a member of the 320th AG Company for about two years, and he had served with the unit in Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Storm. He had volunteered to go to Somalia to enhance his career. He was surprised to find that three of the officers in the 711th were from the 320th.

As commander, Lieutenant Perkins sat in on the daily staff meetings and reported on postal activities directly to General Solomon. He regarded General Solomon as his supervisor while he was in command of the 711th. The Chief of Staff, Colonel Lee, was a mediator with the general, and Captain Jason T. Evans, the G-1, helped obtain support and supplies for the 711th [20].

An officer from the Office of the Department of the Army Inspector General (IG) visited the unit in early May 1993 to check out some complaints from 10th Mountain Division soldiers about poor mail service and morale, welfare, and recreation activities. Lieutenant Perkins believes that the IG knew little about postal operations and had "his mind made up" about the postal situation before he visited the unit. The IG's main complaint, according to Lieutenant Perkins, was that it was unseemly for a lieutenant to work directly for a general officer. According to Lieutenant Perkins, the IG also said that he "didn't think Reservists could do the job because of the way they came together." The IG talked only briefly to Lieutenant Perkins and some of the troops [20].

The Joint Task Force Support Command had some problems with the 711th. Brigadier General Solomon says that the unit lacked cohesiveness and a solid chain of command. Many logistics units and AG units can do their primary mission without being

able to perform other general military missions well, and this was the case for the 711th. There was a constant struggle within the 711th over who was in charge, and there were too many changes in leadership. Shortly after the departure of the second increment, General Solomon wanted the unit to move from its location near the air terminal to a more secure location in the University compound, but he met resistance from the unit. A lot of chain-of-command time had to be spent on this move. However, General Solomon also says that the unit accomplished its mission of moving the mail [29].

Captain Evans says that, based on his daily observations, the 711th "did okay" and the troops "were honest, hard workers and did a good job" [28]. He also says that the leadership of the 711th could have been better and notes that Lieutenant Perkins failed to show up on three separate occasions to meet with the IG [28].

The downsized 711th had nineteen personnel initially, but injuries and personal problems reduced the unit strength to thirteen when it left Somalia on 5 June 1994 and returned to Fort Bragg. The thirteen remaining members of the 711th, most of whom were women, were ready to leave Somalia but did a great job right up to the end [20]. The Air Force postal people had left in mid-April, and the 711th troops missed their help with the mail because now the Air Force just dumped the mail bags on the airfield and left it all to the 711th. The move in May from the air terminal to the University compound made the task of getting the mail and distributing it more difficult. Because the unit received no replacements for their losses, the troops spent their last weeks working hard and trying with too few people to keep up with the mail. The emphasis was on getting the mail broken down, sorted, and distributed to the units within 24 hours after it arrived at the air terminal. The troops usually worked all night to do this [20].

The treatment the troops received when they returned to Fort Bragg for out-processing was routine, but many AC people on the post objected to their wearing the blue United Nations' berets they had worn in Somalia. The men and women of the 711th thought that they had done a good job in Somalia under difficult circumstances, and they took pride in their blue berets. Lieutenant Perkins stuck by his people [20].

G. THE AC PROVISIONAL POSTAL UNITS

After the return of the final part of the 711th, postal service for the reduced troop population in Somalia was provided by three provisional AC postal detachments formed at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, from individual AC soldiers who were designated or volunteered for the mission. Major Nina Garcia, the DA Postal Staff Officer, met with the personnel of

these units and provided assistance on postal matters [2]. AC personnel were used instead of RC personnel for the additional units because of a shortage of TTAD funds for the pay of the Reservists [30].

The first of these provisional units was the 43rd Postal Detachment, commanded by Captain David Papas. The unit consisted of nineteen individuals from AC units across the continental United States (CONUS) who assembled at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, in May 1993 to assume the postal mission in Somalia when the 711th left. The unit spent 5 days processing for deployment at Fort Belvoir, sponsored by the Department of Personnel and Community Services. The processing at Belvoir was difficult because the base was not a mobilization station, did not know what to do, and had no resources with which to do it. Because of poor and incomplete instructions to the volunteers, the troops arrived at Belvoir in different conditions. Some brought TA50 equipment; others did not. Some brought weapons; others did not. Some had desert uniforms; others had green uniforms. No training was provided at Fort Belvoir either in military skills or postal work. There was no time to build any unit cohesion. Captain Papas has no idea why Belvoir was selected as the base for the formation of the unit and believes that either Fort Hood or Fort Bragg would have been better [31].

Captain Papas says his volunteer unit "was the toughest challenge of his career" and adds that it "did not work." There was no unit and no cohesion. He had some key people who knew postal operations. Sergeant First Class Bullard was an instructor in postal operations at the AG School, and he and Captain Papas were the two postal experts in the detachment. There was also another soldier who had experience in post office operations (stamps and registry) and another Staff Sergeant with experience in postal operations. Only five personnel had the F5 ASI. The rest were not qualified in postal work because the AC units asked to name "volunteers" sent unit mail clerks or unqualified people [31].

The 43rd Detachment arrived in Somalia as a group of individuals. Two of the troops with personnel management experience were detached immediately and sent to a higher headquarters. Captain Papas had gone ahead and was in country a week before his unit arrived. When the troops arrived they had a few days of overlap with the 711th and then took over the mission. They had to provide not only mail service but also security and self-defense because Mogadishu was becoming dangerous. Since the Air Force had also reduced its presence, the detachment had to do both the DS and the GS mission. The Air Force was simply throwing mail bags off the planes, and the Army had to do the rest of the work [31].

According to Captain Papas, the remaining members of the 711th were not doing a very good job when he saw them (at the end of their tour). They were not following DoD manuals, and they were not serving as a post office. They were not following proper postal or security procedures, which Captain Papas had to change after he became responsible. They were, however, moving the mail to the units [31].

When Captain Papas took over, another change took place in the entire command structure. The JTF Support Command left, and a new organization, the United Nations Logistical Support Command, under Colonel McManus, took over. By this time, many of the people in Somalia simply wanted to get out of the country, and because they knew they would rotate in 4 months, they put off doing things and did not establish long-term policies or programs. Captain Papas says that he learned a great deal in Somalia about how to provide postal support in a theater of operations [31].

For each of the final two rotations of major support organizations, a new postal detachment was formed, staffed by AC individuals and deployed to perform the mission in generally the same manner as for the 43rd. By that time, the troop strength to be supported had declined substantially, the postal mission was well in hand, and the public had lost interest in Somalia. The controversy over the performance of the 711th, however, was just starting.

H. PERFORMANCE OF THE 711TH POSTAL UNIT

The issue of the 711th AG Company's (GS Postal) performance in Somalia has been contentious. Senior Army leaders have called the 711th a "failure," proving that the volunteer unit concept will not work.¹⁶ However, the evidence from commanders who were in charge of the unit in Somalia is that the 711th AG Company (GS Postal) did a good job.

The Active Army has leveled several criticisms of the 711th AG Company. Some of these were not true, some were misleading, and others were aimed at the wrong target.¹⁷

¹⁶ Both Mr. William Clark, then DASA(M&RA), and Major General Kinzer, then DAMO-OD, intimated that the 711th AG Company did not do a good job in Somalia. General Kinzer said that "it took 90 days for the unit [the 711th] to become effective after it arrived in country" [30].

¹⁷ Copies of the Air Force IG Report or the Army IG Report covering this topic were not available. Army allegations about postal service in Somalia are based on briefing slides used to brief senior Army leaders and on excerpts from documents that were prepared to rebut the IG findings.

Research conducted in the preparation of this case study provides a basis for responding to these criticisms:

- *A provisional postal unit was activated and filled with RC volunteers to solve the need for a permanent postal unit in Somalia.* There never was an intention to provide a "permanent postal unit in Somalia." Army policy was to rotate complete units. After the 711th redeployed, the Army formed and sent to Somalia three provisional postal units filled with AC volunteers.
- *The unit [711th] lacked cohesion because it was composed of individuals who had not worked or trained together as a team.* Although the members of the 711th had not trained together as a unit before the unit was formed, most of the unit's leadership had worked together for several months in the 320th AG Company, and the other members quickly learned to work together after the unit arrived in Somalia. Lack of cohesion in provisional units did not stop the AC from forming three more provisional postal units for Somalia and staffing them with AC volunteers. The AC failed to include time or training to foster unit cohesion in the processing period before deployment of any of these four provisional postal units. Presumably, AC provisional units have no more unit cohesion initially than RC provisional units. The Army appears to dislike provisional units when they are composed of Reservists but dislikes them less when they are composed of AC soldiers.
- *The unit was not validated or technically evaluated by an Army level of command.* This is simply not true. The 711th was validated for deployment and for postal operations by the proper authorities at Fort Bragg in accordance with prescribed Army procedures.
- *The unit worked only two days a week.* The charge that the unit worked only two days a week reveals a lack of understanding of the postal system in Somalia. Initially, mail had to compete for aircraft space with other, sometimes higher priority, cargo. This led early on to complaints about delays in mail delivery, but as the situation stabilized, the mail was flown in from Germany or the United States in bulk about two or three days a week. When a bulk shipment of mail arrived at the Mogadishu Air Terminal, the entire 711th unit worked around the clock to sort it and distribute it to the receiving units. The standard for this activity was to get the mail out to the units within 24 hours of arrival, and the 711th always met this standard. Between mail shipments, unit personnel worked on other tasks and got ready for the next bulk shipment of mail [19 and 25].
- *Experienced and technically proficient staff supervision of postal operations was not always available in Somalia.* This allegation does not apply to the 711th Postal Unit. Even if postal staff officers in Somalia were inexperienced, these personnel were AC officers and not Reservists of the 711th, all of whom were experienced military postal specialists. However, the evidence is that

enough experienced postal officers were in the theater to provide proper staff supervision of the function. The Theater Postal Officer was Chief Warrant Officer Katherine O. Cresswell, USMC, who is reputed to be a postal expert. The Air Force postal commander, Major Walt Kamien, was also a postal expert. Lieutenant Colonel Mike Hardesty, G-1 of the 10th Mountain Division, and Captain Jason T. Evans, G-1 of the Joint Task Force Support Command, were both AG officers with postal experience.

- *An evaluation of the unit by the Air Force postal officer in Somalia found significant problems concerning mail sorting and competency of personnel.* Without knowledge of what the specific charges were and when they were made, it is not possible to determine their truth or applicability to the 711th AG Company.

The best evidence on the performance of the 711th AG Company is the testimony of the officers who supervised the unit. Their views are summarized as follows:

- Major Nina Garcia, DA Staff Postal Officer during Somalia, agrees that there were some problems initially in establishing postal service in Somalia, but these were systemic problems that had nothing to do with the 711th AG Company or the 129th AG Company. Major Garcia says that the 711th did a good job in Somalia under difficult conditions. She believes that the use of RC volunteers to form provisional units can work, and that the 711th was a real success story [27].
- Lieutenant Colonel Mike Hardesty, 10th Mountain Division G-1 and the next higher commander of the 711th from January until March 1993, thought highly of both the 129th and the 711th, but thought that the "RC unit could run circles around the AC unit." The AC unit was not composed entirely of people with postal experience. The RC unit had more disciplined soldiers and better leadership. When it came time to reduce the postal structure in Somalia, Lieutenant Colonel Hardesty kept the 711th in Somalia and sent the 129th back to Fort Bragg. Lieutenant Colonel Hardesty was particularly complimentary about the performance of Captain Dozier. He gave her an outstanding efficiency report and made sure that she was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal [25].
- Brigadier General Billy K. Solomon, Commander, JTF Support Command, says the 711th did a good job. He never saw an occasion when the 711th troops fell down on the job. If the mail sometimes did not get through on time, it was not the fault of the 711th. General Solomon makes the point that provisional units need post-mobilization training to build cohesion and develop a chain of command before they are deployed. Higher authority could have done a better job for the 711th by establishing a METL and putting the unit through a training program before it deployed to Somalia [29].

I. OBSERVATIONS

The story of the 711th Postal Company provides the basis for the following general observations about the Army's use of Reserve volunteers in this instance:

- *The Army was unprepared to form the 711th AG Company.* The process to form a provisional unit staffed by RC volunteers was not established, and the Army fought the problem. As one officer on the DA Staff put it: "Why should the Army prepare to do something that it doesn't want to do?" At each step in the process, it was necessary to invent new procedures. In some cases, the responsible people rose to the challenge and facilitated the process, but in other cases the volunteer unit had to make the best of its situation. Overall, the Army did a poor job of forming and supporting the 711th Postal Unit.
- *The Army Reserve failed to consider all of its assets when seeking volunteers.* USARC was given the mission to find the volunteers and sought them only in the troop program units of the Army Reserve, completely ignoring assets in the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR). No thought was given either to recalling retired military personnel with the appropriate skills. These resources were overlooked partly because the USARC commands only the Army Reserve Units (except for Special Operations Forces), the ARPERCEN commands the IRR, and the Chief of the Mobilization Division, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Department of the Army, "commands" retired personnel. There was no convenient way for the three "commanders" to get together to pool resources. Finding just 48 postal specialists from Troop Program Units (TPUs) for this mission was not a significant problem, but if the need were for large numbers of volunteers with a variety of skills, ignoring the IRR and retired personnel could have adverse consequences. Taking people from units impairs the readiness of the units, while taking people from the IRR or retired population does not. Individuals from the IRR or retired population can be used to provide staff officers with postal or other specialties to augment AC or RC headquarters tasked with theater support missions.
- *No organized attempt was made to foster unit cohesion during the formation of the provisional postal units for Somalia.* The 711th AG Company was not met at Fort Bragg by a dedicated group of trainers skilled in promoting unit cohesion in provisional units. On the contrary, the Army left the 711th on its own. The same thing happened to the three AC provisional postal units that were formed later. The Army has been forming provisional units for years, including many for the Persian Gulf War, but apparently has paid little or no attention to how best to form them. Possibly the Army simply does not know how to promote cohesion rapidly in provisional units.
- *The Army makes extensive use of provisional units staffed by AC personnel.* While opposing the use of provisional units staffed by RC volunteers, the AC habitually uses provisional units staffed by AC individuals. In this case the

Army formed three provisional postal units staffed by AC individuals and one staffed by RC volunteers. No provisional unit can have a high degree of unit cohesion at the outset (cohesion takes time and personnel stability). The first provisional postal unit staffed by AC personnel had the same problems as the provisional unit staffed by RC personnel. Yet the Army focused its criticism on the provisional unit staffed by RC volunteers. It is the provisional nature of the unit that causes a lack of initial cohesion, not the component of the personnel who staff the unit.

- *The use of RC volunteers was perceived as weakening the case for involuntary call-up authority.* Some of the AC and RC personnel involved in the formation of the 711th Postal Company thought that if a provisional volunteer unit succeeded, the Army would have less justification for pressing Congress to give the Secretary of Defense more flexible call-up authority. These persons may have been so intent on finding fault with the RC volunteers that they neglected to provide the best environment for assuring the success of the unit.

Despite all of these problems, the Army was able to form four provisional postal units—one staffed with RC volunteers—and deploy them to Somalia to provide satisfactory postal support in the theater.

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REFERENCES

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ABBREVIATIONS

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AC	Active Component
AG	Adjutant General
ARCOM	Army Reserve Command
ARFOR	Army Force
ARNG	Army National Guard
ARPERCEN	Army Reserve Personnel Center
ASI	Additional Skill Indicator
BSA	Brigade Support Area
CAR	Chief, Army Reserve
DoD	Department of Defense
DPT	Directorate for Plans and Training
DRCS	Directorate of Reserve Component Support
DS	Direct Support
FORSCOM	U.S. Army Forces Command
FY	fiscal year
GS	General Support
HHD	Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment
IG	Inspector General
IRR	Individual Ready Reserve
MAT	Mobilization Assistance Team
METL	Mission Essential Task List
MOS	military occupational specialty
NCO	noncommissioned officer
OCAR	Office of the Chief, Army Reserve
RC	Reserve Component
RG	Readiness Group
TOE	Table of Organization and Equipment
TPU	Troop Program Unit
UIC	Unit Identification Code
USAR	United States Army Reserve
USARC	United States Army Reserve Command

USMC	United States Marine Corps
USPS	United States Postal Service

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